



STATE OF WASHINGTON
WASHINGTON STATE BOARD OF HEALTH
1102 SE Quince Street • PO Box 47990
Olympia, Washington 98504-7990

February 18, 2003

The Honorable Kelli Linville
Chair, House Agriculture and Natural Resources Committee
Post Office Box 40600
328 John L. O'Brien Bldg.
Olympia, Washington 98504-0600

Dear Representative Linville,

I am writing as chair of the Washington State Board of Health to share the Board's opposition to House Bill 1754, relating to agricultural producers who slaughter and prepare one thousand or fewer poultry animals, which will be heard in your committee February 18, 2003.

Food safety is an issue from the farm to the table, on an individual and statewide basis. Different agencies are responsible for ensuring that food is safe at different stages of food production, processing and handling. House Bill 1754 seeks to remove all agencies from ensuring the safety of a primary source of food borne illness over the last 10 years: poultry.

Poultry is one of the most common sources of *Campylobacter jejuni*, which has overtaken *Salmonella spp.* as the most common cause of food borne disease. *Campylobacter* species cause acute gastroenteritis with diarrhea, abdominal pain, fever, nausea and vomiting. Recently, *Campylobacter* infections have been identified as the most common antecedent to an acute neurological disease, Guillen-Barre syndrome. Poultry was identified as the vehicle for eight food borne illness outbreaks in 2001. (Department of Health Spring Food Safety Workshop, June 17, 2002.)

The illnesses that occur from handling undercooked or raw poultry provide a public health justification for regulating poultry producers. Although there may be diverse opinions regarding the level of acceptable risk to consumers from small poultry producers, it is the opinion of the Board that the current level of oversight provides the most appropriate level of public health protection and safety. Therefore we are not in support any legislation that would diminish the current level of public health effort.

Sincerely,

Linda Lake
Chair, Washington State Board of Health

cc: House Agriculture and Natural Resources Committee Members
Washington State Board of Health Members
Ms. Mich'l Prentice Needham, Governor's Executive Policy Office
Ms. Patty Hayes, Department of Health
Ms. Jennifer Tebaldi, Department of Health
Mr. Don Sloma, Washington State Board of Health